

Family Problems and Conflict: Turning Filth into Fragrance

Sadhguru answers a question on dealing with family problems and conflict between parents, children and siblings, and looks at how the “battleground” could become a possibility for transformation.

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Questioner: *When there is conflict and discord in the immediate family – with one’s parents or siblings for example – irrespective of what the reasons may be, how does one arrive at some harmony?*



Sadhguru: Since you said parents and siblings, you have one excuse – you did not choose these people. If it was about husband and wife, there was a choice – you could not blame it on someone else!

Family is a good training ground for you to know your limitations. You are cocooned with a certain number of people – which means every day, whatever you do, you have to step on each other's toes. There are things they do that you hate, but still you have to be with them. It isn't like your Facebook family of 10,000 – if there is someone you don't like, you click him out.

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Family is a beautiful place for you to grow beyond your [likes and dislikes](#). Your likes and dislikes are the basis of compulsiveness within you. When you are stuck up with likes and dislikes, consciousness is out of question. The moment you like or dislike something, you naturally behave compulsively – favorably compulsively to what you like, in a reactive way compulsively to what you do not like.

Becoming conscious

Family is a cocoon where whether you like it or not, you have to be with these people for a certain period of time. Either you make this a bitter experience, or you learn to transcend your likes and dislikes. Let's say there are certain aspects about your husband that you hate. If after some time, you say, "He's like that – it's okay," he has not changed, but you transcended your dislike for a particular type of behavior or whatever else it was that bothered you about him. If you become bitter or you resign, in the sense of "There is no other way – I have to put up with them," all the pain and struggle of being with people will be wasted. But if you say, "Yes, this is how they are, but it is okay with me. Let me go on with these people joyfully," you consciously transcend.

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When you transcend your likes and dislikes, unknowingly, you become conscious. Unknowingly, you turn spiritual, which is the best way to turn spiritual. Not by saying, "I am going to take a spiritual path" but because as a life, you became conscious enough to transcend your limitations, likes and dislikes and you turned spiritual, without attaching the word "spiritual" to it. The best way to become spiritual is to consciously evolve to a point where you are not compulsorily reactive anymore. Family is a good place for you to train yourself towards that. You are not trapped in this forever. Whatever kind of family you live in, it is only for a certain period of time. You must use this period of time to transcend your likes and dislikes.

If people around you do not agree with you, you are in a very good place. I always tell people in the [ashram](#), "Choose someone that you cannot stand and learn to work with them, joyfully. It will do wonders to you." If you choose to be with someone you like, you will become compulsive to be only with those sorts of people. Family is not the problem. Your wanting to be with what you like is the problem. Don't choose what you like. See how to make what is there wonderful. What comes to you is not your business. What you make out of it is your business.

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People say things like, "Oh, it's a gorgeous day" or "It's a bad day," depending on the weather. Just because there are clouds, it is not a bad day. Leave the weather to nature. One day sun, another day clouds; one day rain, another day snow – it's all right. If it's sunny, you go bare-chested; if it's raining, you go with a raincoat; if it's snowing, you go with a snowboard. No matter what, it is up to you to make it a good day.

Similarly, do not bother about who is sitting around you right now. You make this a wonderful process of sitting with this person. This does not mean you have to sit with them forever. Everyone comes and goes. Either they come and go, or you come and go. Whoever is here, whatever is here – make the best out of it for now. If you have other choices, you can change, but the important thing is that you

joyfully change. It should happen out of conscious choice, not out of compulsion, that because you cannot be here, you have to jump somewhere else. If you leave in such a state, wherever you go, you will be the same. If you do not know how to make it here, you do not know how to make it anywhere.

Measuring results

And how will you know whether this whole spiritual process is working or not? Only by results. If with the same people, you can wake up a little more joyful, you are a little more at ease, [they do not irritate you anymore](#) as they used to do – that means you are progressing. Everywhere, progress is measured by results – here too.

It happened one day – there was a queue at the gates of heaven. Saint Peter was checking everyone's accounts before admitting them. There was an Italian taxi driver from Vegas in a shiny polka dot shirt and aviator glasses, cigarette dangling. Right behind him was a bishop. He looked at the man in distaste, "Why is he even in this line to heaven, first of all?" But you know, strange are the ways of God. When the taxi driver's time came, he said, resigned to his fate, "Okay, wherever you send me... What's the problem." As a taxi driver, he is used to that – wherever the customer wants to go, he goes; he does not choose his destination. All his accounts were checked. Then Peter welcomed him with a big smile and gave him a nice silken robe. Two very pretty angels came and took him into heaven.

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The bishop was looking at this in amazement. When his turn came, they looked at his books, welcomed him, gave him workman's overalls and a mopping stick, and said, "You go and clean corridor No. 127." The bishop was distraught, "What is this? That Italian taxi driver comes from Sin City – I don't even want to utter the name – where he must have driven all kinds of people – and you gave him silken robes and angels, and he went to heaven. Me, I am a bishop – I've been in the service of God. And for me – workman's overalls, mopping stick and corridor 127 – I know how long it is. Why?" Peter looked at him and said, "Please listen. This is not like church – this is heaven. Here, we go by results. When you gave your sermons, people generally slept. But when that guy drove his taxi, everyone said, 'Oh my God! Oh my God! Oh my God!'"

You must also go by results. To know whether your spiritual process is working or not, just see, whatever the outside situation, are you in conflict within yourself or not? If there is conflict within you, you need to work. You have not been physically beaten up. All they do is say things. Whatever they know best, they do. What you know best, you must do. If you know best, you will keep yourself well. If you keep yourself well, you may transform them too, but I would not go that far with you right now. It does not matter if someone is shouting at you or abusing you. If you want, you can write a new dictionary for yourself. You can translate all the abuses into nice, sweet things. In any case, you must know they are doing their best. Unfortunately, their best may be garbage – what to do. You can only have sympathy for such people.

Filth to fragrance

Right now, you have to be there. So many times, not just you – every one of us is trapped with people and situations we definitely do not want to be in. Where we are is never entirely our choice. But what we make out of it is entirely our choice. Exercise it. If you exercise it, the outside will also slowly become a choice. Over a period of time, you will see that naturally, situations will arrange around yourself in a most beautiful way.

The first thing is you arrange yourself in such a way that you are a beautiful human being. How someone else sees it is their business.

My experience of the world is too fantastic. Wherever I go, people are in tears of love and joy. What more do I want? I know that is not the reality for the whole world, but the world arranges itself like that around me. This is because I have taken time to arrange myself in such a way that no matter where

I am, I am like this only. Slowly, the world is imitating what I am. You also do this. Do not worry whether the world arranges itself in a certain way or not – it will invariably happen over a period of time. The first thing is you arrange yourself in such a way that you are a beautiful human being. How someone else sees it is their business.

Right now, they want to walk in the gutter – let them walk for some time, till they get tired of it. Live in such a way that when they look at you, even the gutter people see at some point that it is worth being the way you are. It will not elude them. They are bitter because their experience of life is bitter and unfulfilled, and this bitterness comes out in the form of conflict. Set an example for them that there is a way to live differently. In yoga, one of the most enduring symbols has always been that of a lotus flower, because a [lotus flower](#) grows best wherever the slush is thick – the filthier, the better. Such filth transforms into such ethereal beauty and fragrance. This is spiritual process. Getting allergic to slush is not spiritual process. Becoming a part of the slush is not spiritual process. Transforming the slush into fragrance is spiritual process.

***Editor's Note:** This article is based on an excerpt from the [September 2014 issue of Forest Flower](#). Pay what you want and download. (set '0' for free). [Print subscriptions](#) are also available.*